

## PARALLEL STRUCTURE REMINDERS

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### 1) With elements joined by coordinating conjunctions, especially *and*, *but*, and *or*.

**FAULTY:** My friends never judged me by **my words** *or* what I did.

**CORRECT:** My friends never judged me by **my words** *or* my actions.

**CORRECT:** My friends never judged me by what I said *or* (by) **what I did**.

### 2) Use parallel structure with elements in lists or in a series.

**FAULTY:** The frustrated customer wanted **to exchange** the article, **to obtain** a refund, *or* she wanted to speak to the manager.

**CORRECT:** The frustrated customer wanted **to exchange** the article, **to obtain** a refund, *or* to speak to the manager.

**CORRECT:** The frustrated customer wanted to **exchange** the article, **obtain** a refund, *or* speak to the manager.

### 3) Use parallel structure with elements being compared. (*X is more than / better than Y*)

**FAULTY:** I like **swimming** better than to dive.

**CORRECT:** I like **swimming** better than diving.

**CORRECT:** I like to swim better than **to dive**.

### 4) Use parallel structure with elements joined by a linking verb or a verb of being.

**FAULTY:** **To succeed** is opening a new opportunity.

**CORRECT:** **To succeed** is to open a new opportunity.

**CORRECT:** Succeeding is **opening** a new opportunity.

## 5) Use parallel structure with elements joined by a correlative conjunction.

These are the major correlative conjunctions: **either / or**    **neither / nor**    **both / and**    **not only / but also**

**FAULTY:** Mary is *neither* a Democrat *nor* is she a Republican.

**CORRECT:** Mary is *neither* a Democrat *nor* a Republican.

**CORRECT:** *Neither* is Mary a Democrat *nor* is she a Republican.

## 6) Make pronoun reference consistent.

Issues often arise when using the pronoun “you”. “You” is often used when citing examples or when referring to a general population: “When driving, you don’t want to close your eyes. You could wreck.”

This would be fine in a set of instructions. But if you’re writing a formal essay in third person, it doesn’t work.

A research paper, a critique, an analysis, or a report is about something else. That’s what makes it third person. We are not addressing the subject of our paper. So, when we slip in to using “you,” it confuses the reader.

Here are some more examples of incorrect usage of the general “you”:

- At Edison, **students** have access to computer classrooms where **you** can type your papers and email them to the professor.
  - The second sentence begins with a third person subject, “students.” Where does the “you” come from? Who is going to be typing papers? That’s right, the students. The correction: “At Edison, students have access to computer classrooms where they can type their papers and email them to professors.”
- It’s silly for **a person** to be scared of ghosts. **You** just need to remember they don’t exist!
  - The final example is concerns two separate sentences. Independently, the sentences are fine. But very few sentences work independently. We know the second sentence is a continuation of thought from the first sentence. So, the sentences need to match in tone and in point of view. There are two corrections, but only one works in formal writing: “It’s silly for a person to be scared of ghosts. One just needs to remember they don’t exist!” You can substitute other third person singular pronouns in place of “one”, such as “he or she” or “a person.” Or you can make the pronouns plural, exchange “a person” for “people” and “one” or “they.”

Consistency is the key with all the various elements in your sentence.

- **Your ability** to drive is dependent on **your completion** of driver’s education class.
- Many believe **one** should be responsible for supporting **one’s** own family and not be dependent on the government.

